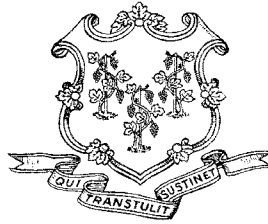


SENATOR MARTIN M. LOONEY
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

Eleventh District
New Haven, Hamden & North Haven



State of Connecticut
SENATE

State Capitol
Hartford, Connecticut 06106-1591
132 Fort Hale Road
New Haven, Connecticut 06512
Home: 203-468-8829
Capitol: 860-240-8600
Toll-free: 1-800-842-1420
www.SenatorLooney.cga.ct.gov

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Good morning Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee. I am here to testify in support of SB 258 AN ACT CONCERNING INFANT SAFE SLEEP PRACTICES.

Each year, more than a dozen Connecticut children die needlessly due to unsafe sleep practices. By educating parents before they leave the hospital following their children's births, we can potentially influence the parents' behavior and possibly save their children's lives.

The importance of safe sleep practices is described in the Office of the Child Advocate and the State Child Fatality Review Panel's recently released report reviewing infant and toddler deaths in 2013. The report, entitled "Preventing Infant-Toddler Deaths in Connecticut," includes the following information:

- **Connecticut infants are more likely to die from unsafe sleeping conditions than from child abuse, or from any type of accidental injury**, including car accidents, choking, drowning, or falls.¹
- In 2013, there were at least **18 Connecticut children**² whose deaths were associated with unsafe sleep environments.

¹ "Preventing Infant-Toddler Deaths in Connecticut: Comprehensive Review and Assessment Infant and Toddler Deaths in 2013 Best Practice Recommendations." Office of the Child Advocate website. Published July 31, 2014. Available at: http://www.ct.gov/oca/lib/oca/Final_OCA_Infant_Toddler_Fatality_Report.pdf

- The average age of these children at their time of death was **three months old**.
- The Child Advocate stated, “**These deaths should be considered largely preventable.**”
- The most common unsafe sleep environments include the following:
 - Co-sleeping with parent(s) or siblings in an adult-size bed
 - Sleeping overnight in a car seat (outside of the vehicle)
 - Sleeping in a crib with blankets, pillows, or on their stomachs
 - Put to sleep with a bottle in an adult bed

The American Academy of Pediatrics³ recommends the following safe sleep practices:

- Always place babies on their backs for sleep;
- Use a firm sleep surface covered by a fitted sheet;
- Have the baby share the parent’s room, but not the parent’s bed;
- Keep soft objects, including pillows and loose bedding, out of a baby’s sleep area;
- Avoid exposing the baby to tobacco smoke.

Although previous public service campaigns - such as the 1994 Back to Sleep campaign - successfully taught parents to put their babies to bed on their backs, some of the more recent recommendations, including having the baby sleep in a crib without blankets, are less well known. Because many parents are not aware of these other safe sleep practices, they are inadvertently putting their babies in danger.

² *Id.*

³ “Policy Statement: SIDS and Other Sleep-Related Infant Deaths: Expansion of Recommendations for a Safe Infant Sleeping Environment.” American Academy of Pediatrics website. 128 PEDIATRICS 1030. (November 2011), available at: <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2011/10/12/peds.2011-2284.full.pdf+html>

Here in Connecticut, both our Department of Public Health and Department of Children and Families have already taken major steps with regard to the implementation of and education about safe sleep practices. DPH regulations⁴ require Connecticut day care operators to place infants (under 12 months old) to bed on their backs in a crib or bed that is free of soft surfaces and objects such as pillows, quilts, soft bumpers or stuffed toys. Operators are also prohibited from placing children to sleep in car seats, infant carriers, or swings, unless medically necessary.

In addition, DCF recently issued a safe sleep practice guide⁵ that is helping to inform parents of children involved with DCF. The guide requires DCF staff to provide educational information – including the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics - to all DCF-involved soon-to-be parents and parents of infants regarding safe sleep environments. DCF staff are also required to advise parents of infants that unsafe sleeping conditions is the leading cause of preventable deaths of infants in the state.⁶

We can build on DPH and DCF's efforts by **ensuring that all new parents are informed about safe sleep practices** before their children leave the hospital after birth. Providing this information in the hospital will not only reinforce what DCF staff is telling DCF-involved families, but also educate other families in the state who might not otherwise access information on safe sleep practices.

⁴ Department of Public Health Regulations for Child Day Care Centers & Group Day Care Homes. Sec. 19a-79-10(g). Available at: http://www.sots.ct.gov/sots/lib/sots/regulations/title_19a/079.pdf

⁵ "Standards and Practice for Safe Sleep Environments: Assessing the Safety of An Infant's Sleep Environment Practice Guide." Connecticut Department of Children and Families website. Effective Date March 5, 2014. Available at: http://www.ct.gov/dcf/lib/dcf/policy/pdf/Safe_Sleep_-_practice_guide_FINAL.pdf

⁶ The practice guide also requires that DCF social workers observe the infant's sleep environment at every home visit or placement visit. If the social workers observe any issues of concern, they are required to discuss those concerns with the caregivers.

In order to ensure that as many families of newborns as possible receive information about safe sleep practices, SB 258 would require hospitals to provide information about safe sleep practices to parents of newborns before they bring their child home from the hospital, including the recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics. Connecticut would become the eighth state in the nation to enact such potentially life-saving requirements, joining California, Florida, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Nebraska, Texas and Michigan.

I hope you will support SB 258. Thank you for your consideration.